DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 406 764 EC 305 416

AUTHOR Witham, Joan H.
TITLE Acceleration: Does It Happen More Frequently for Gifted Students in Private or Public Schools?
PUB DATE Apr 94
NOTE 6p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 1994).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Acceleration (Education); Age Grade Placement; Delivery Systems; Early Admission; *Educational Methods; Elementary Secondary Education; Flexible Progression; *Gifted; *Private Schools; *Public Schools

ABSTRACT

As part of a larger study on differences between public and private schools in the education of gifted students, this study examined use of acceleration as an educational approach. The paper notes that although the weight of research evidence strongly supports the position that acceleration is a highly effective intervention technique with intellectually gifted students, many educators have negative attitudes toward this approach. This study examined programs in 23 private and public schools that serve gifted students. Directors and teachers were surveyed, school documents were analyzed, and classrooms were observed to see the extent that acceleration was used. Questions were asked on early entrance, skipping grades, use of texts and materials beyond grade level, different content, and faster-paced classes. Results suggest that the private schools had more flexibility to set standards on acceleration. However, the overall frequency concerning acceleration of skipping classes (25.9 percent) and starting school earlier (43.5 percent) reported by both public and private schools was quite low. Accelerated texts and materials were found much more frequently than skipping grades or early entrance (public, 76.1 percent; private, 76.9 percent). Teachers in both types of schools strongly (92 percent) believed they offered a fast-paced classroom to gifted children. (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Joan H Witham, Ph.D.
Southwest Texas State University
San Marcos, TX 78666 (512-245-3084)
AERA 1994

ED 406 764

Acceleration: Does It Happen More Frequently for Gifted Students in Private or Public Schools?

Parents, in considering whether to choose a private school over a public school with its added expense, should examine whether the school offers a substantially different program than the public schools to meet the special needs of their gifted child. This research study explored the issue of differences between public and private schools in the areas of acceleration, curriculum integration, and the teaching of critical thinking skills. This paper will address only acceleration.

Acceleration can take many forms. In this study, acceleration is composed of the following components as described by Brody & Benbow (1987): early admission to kindergarten, grade advancement, completing two or more years of a subject in one year, or placing a child in a higher-level course a year or two early. An advanced level of material (curriculum that is above grade level for that age) and fast pace (presenting and learning material at a faster rate than regular classes) also were attributes of curriculum acceleration that were researched (Feldhusen, 1989).

The weight of research evidence strongly supports the position that acceleration is a highly effective intervention technique with intellectually gifted learners (Brody & Benbow, 1987; Daurio, 1979; Stanley, 1991, Kulik and Kulik, 1984) but it does not seem to be a preferred method in schools. Southern, Jones, & Fiscus (1989), in studying current practices in the public schools, reported that "practitioners regard acceleration in general and early entrance in particular as risky approaches to serving the needs of gifted children (p.29)

Clark (1983) gives a rationale and advantages for acceleration:

1. gifted students often select older companions with more similar levels of maturity
2. neither the method nor the age of acceleration appears to be of consequence;
3. can be used in any school
4. allows capable students to enter careers sooner, resulting in more productivity;
5. educational costs are lower for because students spend less time in school
6. accelerated students do as well as or often better than the older students in their classes
7. bright students suffer less boredom and dissatisfaction
8. social and emotional adjustment are generally high, in most reports above average
9. parents and accelerated students favor it (p. 152.).

Some possible reasons for the negative attitudes of educators toward acceleration are: the convenience of lockstep promotion, chronological grade placement, ignorance of research, discredited belief in social maladjustment, and state laws preventing early admission (Clark, 1983, p. 153). Most fears of critics are that the gifted and talented will suffer from social immaturity in an accelerated setting and will experience emotional difficulty. However, the current literature contradicts this view. Janos and Robinson (1985) concluded in a recent review that gifted and talented students are socially and emotionally well-adjusted when radically accelerated at the university level. The literature on acceleration shows that acceleration works successfully with gifted students, both through the acceleration of the students' program and through the use of more sophisticated materials.

Study

My study looked at programs in 23 private and public schools that served the gifted (Table 1). Directors and teachers were surveyed, school documents were analyzed, and classrooms were observed to see the extent that acceleration was used with gifted students. Questions were asked on early entrance, skipping grades, the use of texts and materials beyond grade level, different content, childen working at their own pace, and if the classroom was a fast-paced classroom.

EC 305416

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL
HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
J. Witham

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Table 1 Breakdown of Sample by Private and Public Schools

Public Schools/Classes in Regular Schools (14)
Alonzo W. Bates Academy (Detroit, MI)
ASTRAL (New York City, NY)
Balboa (Los Angeles, CA)
Bannaker School(Gary, IN)
Cleveland Major Work (Cleveland, OH)
Jefferson County (Louisville, KY)
Manchester School (Fresno, CA)
Roosevelt School (Elkhart, IN)
Samuel Morse Middle School (Milwaukee, WI)
Ted Lenhart Regional Gifted Center (Chicago, IL)
Tuttle Middle School (Crawfordsville, IN)
Vinton School (Lafayette, IN)
run Walter Reed Junior High (Los Angeles, CA)
Webster School (Livonia, MI)

Private Schools for Gifted (10)
Eagle School (Madison, WI)
Emerson School (Ann Arbor, MI)
Evergreen School (Seattle, WA)
Hollingworth Preschool (NYC)
Hunter Elementary School (NYC)*
Mirman School (Los Angeles,CA)
Open Window (Seattle, WA)
Roeper School (Bloomfield, MI)
Seattle Country Day School (WA)
Sycamore School (Indianapolis, IN)

*Part of the NYC school district though more autonomously with curriculum.

Results of Acceleration
Teacher Survey

Self-contained gifted classes in public and private schools did differ in the frequency of accelerating students from one grade to the next and in using accelerated material in the classroom, when tested first on the teacher survey with a multivariate analysis using Hotellings T^2 with (14, 48) D.F. Results suggested that there were significant differences at the .001 level between public and private schoc' teachers concerning acceleration in their classrooms (See Table 2).

An examination of the univariate F-tests with (1,60) D.F.on each teacher survey item on acceleration indicated that the following were all significant with private school teachers reporting their schools doing significantly more than public school on:

1. skipping grades ($p<.001$)
2. using textbooks 2 years beyond grade level ($p<.002$)
3. the percentage of students who were above grade level achievement ($p<.05$),
4. using next grade-level materials($p<.06$)
5. not having the same content as regular classrooms ($p<.08$)

Table 2
Comparison of Private/Public Teacher's Survey on Acceleration

Question	PUB/PVT	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know(%)
A1. Early Entrance	PUB	47.1	35.3	17.6
	PVT	38.2	41.2	20.6
A2. Skip Grade	PUB	17.3	67.3	15.4
	PVT	39.4	60.6	
A3. Texts Not Grade Level	PUB	51.0	49.0	
	PVT	51.9	48	
A4. Texts 1 year beyond	PUB	80.4	19.6	
	PVT	70.4	29.6	
A5. Texts 2+years beyond	PUB	52.9	47.1	
	PVT	84.6	15.4	
A6. Materials not Grade Level	PUB	55.6	44.4	
	PVT	41.2	58.8	
A7. Materials 1 year Beyond	PUB	75.9	24.1	
	PVT	76.5	23.5	
A8. Materials 2 years Beyond	PUB	77.4	22.6	
	PVT	91.2	08.8	

Question	PUB/PVT	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know(%)
A9.Content Not Same as Regular Class	PUB	48.1	51.9	
	PVT	72.4	27.6	
A10. Child Attends College	PUB	01.9	92.3	05.8
	PVT	02.9	97.1	
A11. Use Next Grade's Materials	PUB	83.3	16.7	
	PVT	97.1	02.9	
A12. Go at Own Pace	PUB	90.4	09.6	
	PVT	94.3	05.7	
A14. Fast Paced	PUB	23.2	75.0	
	PVT	84.8	15.2	

Question		75+(%)	51-75%	0-50%
A13. % Above Grade Level	PUB	71.2	23.1	5.8
	PVT	82.4	11.8	5.9

Interview Questionnaire

Interesting enough, an examination, using multivariate analysis, of the directors responses in both public and private schools indicated no significant difference on the frequency of accelerating students from one grade to the next or in the use of accelerated curriculum materials.

Document Analysis

Multivariate analysis with (3, 19) D.F. of the document analysis was significant ($p<.01$) with differences between public and private school documents from each of 23 schools (Table 8). Univariate F-tests with (1,21) D.F.was significant ($p>.001$) for acceleration. Acceleration was significantly correlated between the document analysis and the directors questionnaires (see Table 10). There was also a significant correlation ($p>.05$) of documents and acceleration on both type of school (public or private).

Conclusions

While there has been no research on acceleration of gifted students in private schools, this study was consistent with the literature on public schools. The private schools seem to have more flexibility to set standards on skipping children or using many different texts and materials without the restraints set by school districts or state requirements. A number of schools visited were ungraded which makes moving faster through the sequence perhaps easier than in the public school with the lockstep method. From observation, private schools also used a wider variety of materials with or without textbooks.

Though the results indicate there were differences between private and public schools on acceleration, the overall frequency concerning acceleration of skipping classes (25.9%) and starting school earlier (43.5%) reported by both public and private schools was quite low. Comments made by the teachers and directors on acceleration collaborated the statistical findings. A second grade private school teacher commented, "When children start school in a gifted program, they should be placed at the appropriate level for their age or they often have developmental problems." Others noted that acceleration was unnecessary because of their broad and in-depth program.

In contrast to the teacher survey, there were no significant differences between public and private school directors using multivariate and univariate analysis on levels of acceleration. However, there was a significant correlation between the school documents and what directors reported regarding acceleration. This agrees with the realities of what directors are expected to do as part of their job responsibilities. In most programs (especially in private schools), the director is usually the one responsible for writing or approving materials concerning the program.

Accelerated texts and materials were found much more frequently (directors, 85.7% and teachers 76% or more) than skipping classes or early entrance to school. Many teachers reported using texts and materials at the same grade level (public, 48.7%; private, 50%) and one or more years beyond grade level (public, 76.1%; private, 76.9%) or two or more years beyond grade

level (public, 63.6%; private, 82.8%), with more teachers using advanced materials than textbooks at the higher level. While collecting data, the researcher noticed the number of times public school teachers mentioned that students must first meet the requirements for that grade before going on to in-depth or accelerated work. However, both public and private school teachers indicated that children could progress through the next year's material and could work at their own pace.

The emphasis, both written about and observed, in these full-time programs in both public and private schools was on a broad program that was more in-depth and faster paced than regular classroom programs. Teachers in both types of schools strongly (92%) believed that they offered a fast-paced classroom to gifted children. Teachers mentioned horizontal enrichment , an emphasis on inquiry, and in-depth study (a concept used frequently) as being offered more than straight acceleration of content. Individualization was another way to offer students the opportunity to move ahead in a subject. Some students were permitted to work at their own pace in individual programs. Math was the content area most mentioned as individualized or in which to accelerate students.

Significance of the Study

Where parents are looking for differences between the public and private schools, this study has indicated that there might be some differences in the area of acceleration. Teachers and school documents in private schools report differences in permitting acceleration over the public school. Though the overall use of acceleration was low for skipping grades and early entrance, it was quite high for using accelerated materials.

Currently 11% of all students (1991) attend private schools with a large percent being religious schools. Not all parents who wish to can send their child to a private school because of the added expense, unless there is scholarship or other money available. The Choice program offers parents the opportunity to choose either a private or public school for their child with part of the expenses paid by the local district or state, or through tax credits. If implemented, this program could impact upon students now attending public school who might move to private schools if taxpayers money or tax credits were available. This study might offer aid to parents depending upon whether they are looking for a program using acceleration. More studies of this nature are needed to validate true differences between public and private schools.

References:

Brody, I. E., and Benbow, C. (1987). Accelerative strategies: How effective are they for the gifted? Gifted Child Quarterly 31: 105-109.

Clark, B. (1983). Growing up gifted. Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill.

Daurio, S.(1979). Educational enrichment versus acceleration: A review of the literature. In Educating the gifted: Acceleration and enrichment, edited by W.C. George, S. J. Cohn, and J.C. Stanley. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 13-63.

Feldhusen, J. F., Hansen, J. B. & Kennedy. D. M. (1989). Curriculum development for GCT teachers. Gifted Child Today, Vol. 12, Issue 65, No. 6, 12-19.

Janos, M., and N. M. Robinson (1985). Psychosocial development in intellectually gifted children. in The Gifted and talented: Developmental perspectives, edited by F.D. Horowitz and M. O'Brien. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 149-195.

Kulik, J. A. & Kulik, C. C. (1984). Effects of accelerated instruction on students. Review of Educational Research, 54, 409-426.

Southern, W. T., Jones, E. D. , Fiscus, E. D. (1989). Practitioner objections to the academic acceleration of gifted children. Gifted Child Quarterly, 33(1), 29-35.

Stanley, J.(1991). An academic model for educating the mathematically talented. Gifted Child Quarterly, 35 (1), 36-42.

ACCELERATION:

Teacher Survey

Multivariate	SIGNIFICANT at .001
Univariate	SIGNIFICANT Skip grades (.001), Texts 2+ (.002), % above grade level (.002)
	Content not same (.064) and use next grade materials (.078)
Correlation	SIGNIFICANT Acceleration & Thinking Skills on Survey r=.26 ($p<.05$)

Questionnaire

Multivariate	NONE (.642)
Univariate	NONE
	SIGNIFICANT directors 3 variables + enroll/type/class/school (TYPE/CLASS SIGN.)
Correlation	SIGNIFICANT Directors & Curriculum

Document Analysis

Multivariate	SIGNIFICANT (.013)
Univariate	SIGNIFICANT (.001) on Acceleration
	NONSIG. Class vs schools showed trend of whole schools lower/small schools higher
Multivariate	SIGNIFICANT (.069) of AC documents with directors on 3 variables on enroll, type, class
Univariate	SIGNIFICANT of documents and directors on acceleration on TYPE (.004) & CLASS (.06)
Correlation	SIGNIFICANT r=-.42 ($p<.05$) DA & Directors on acceleration